

Dear Jerry,

1/18/93

I've read about a fifth of Hersh's The Samson Option. It is impressive and well-written, predictable for him. It is also dishonest, the reason I write you about it. I do not know whether you've read it and if you have not, whether you'll have the time to read it critically. I did not begin that way but the further I got into it the more apparent it was to me that he intended a one-sided account of what I presume is true, that Israel has the bomb.

After reading this much of the book I realized that he has been without any explanation of why Israel believed it required the bomb, with a single, passing mention that can be taken that way. This was Ike's failure to respond to Ben Gurion's request that Israel be included under the US nuclear shield.

Along with the absence of any presentation of Israeli justification of proceeding with the bomb is an absence of any presentation of what, militarily and politically, Israel faced, particularly when it was so much weaker than it now is.

He can be excused, if one stretched, for not have a chapter on this, but I do not excuse it and believe that both fairness and honesty required it. Otherwise the book is polished propaganda, not a full and dependable account.

Before Truman was elected, when I was still doing radio news at what became WGMS, I recall clearly that Egypt was importing all the nazi scientists it could get for military projects. Of these I am clear in my recollection of missiles.

Iraq's hostility to Israel is well-known, even historic. Did not Israel have to regard itself as a potential target of Iraqi atomic or nuclear bombs?

Until Camp David, as he does not mention, the entire Muslim world was in a state of war with Israel. Those agreements led to ~~Israel~~ Egypt's recognition of the State of Israel. It is the only Muslim country to recognize that state and the only ^{one} ~~any~~ not to have persisted in a state of war with Israel. They have as their continuing policy wiping the state of Israel out. Now these are things I not only did not read where they belong in such a book, up front, I also checked the index. Under PLO the index has three mentions only, ^{none} ~~see~~ with any subject indicated. I just thought to check the index for Arafat. Not there!

Now this is not that large a book that a few pages could not have been added in fairness and in honesty if he had intended either.

So we have a book that is critical of Israel for developing the bomb that does not tell the reader why Israel decided to develop the bomb. Nor what the international attitude toward it is, as reflected at the UN. Nor why the enormous expenditure was invested in developing the bomb at the cost of so many urgent needs that could not be met and at the cost of fantasic indebtedness.

There can be legitimate disagreements over what has to be included in such a book

and what might not be. My own view is that on such a subject all that within reason can be interpreted as relevant should be included.

One that I believe he should not have overlooked I realize others may regard differently, but it gets to the environment of Israel's belief it needed the bomb.

After all the wars the Arabs lost, when as the simple price for US recognition of the PLO it asked for only a statement that it recognized the right of the State of Israel to live in peace within secure borders, the PLO itself rejected this through its executive council but Arafat, under heavy pressure, pretended to. He did not. He could have been more overtly evasive and refusing the issue ~~the~~ statement which still would not have been binding on the PLO. His actual statement the US administration grabbed and interpreted as recognizing Israel did not. He did not mention the State of Israel. He spoke only of the "people" of Israel. That is deliberately not recognizing the right of the State to live in peace, as the world pretended. And he soon blew that by refusing to condemn a PLO terrorist attack in which it got caught.

To most of the readers these facts and so many more like them will be unknown and thus from the approach he ~~has~~ ^{from what} taken and I recall from reviews and commentaries they will be made to have anti-Israel feelings and attitudes or they will have these attitudes reinforced.

Israel did not take the Iraqi nuclear plant out until 6/81, long. long after it was clear that ~~it~~ ^{they} was aiming at the bomb and that in this much of the world had to have ~~helped~~ helped it, the world that sits in judgement of Israel on its bomb. Of course also the part of the world that pretended ignorance of what Iraq was up to while helping it do it.

It was not long before the world was deeply indebted to the Israelis for ending the ~~Irak~~ bomb threat from Iraq. Which gives every indication of persisting in it at all and very considerable costs. Including at this very minute.

What do you think the situation, especially our situation, would have been if Saddam had that bomb to use during the gulf war?

I've mentioned nothing about the other Muslim arms proliferation, all of which Israel has to consider is available for use against it-by states that persist in non-recognition and in a state of war. Nothing about the Muslim CBW capabilities, some rather well known. But these dangers to Israel deserve no mention in such a book? The other efforts against it, like trying to ruin Israel economically?

If the state were not Israel and if the Muslims did not monopolize the world's energy supplies I think there would be an entirely different reaction. Witness India and Pakistan, and China ~~on~~ North Korea. And suspects, like South Africa. And the current situation in which for all practical purposes the Muslim world is silent about Iraq and what Saddam has been and is now doing. Including in challenging the UN and not living up to the agreement to which he did agree to end the gulf war....Hersh did not begin with honest intentions and what he evolved is not honest. It is propaganda.

Hersh